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ARE OUR SCHOOL HISTORIES ANGLOPHOBIC?

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THE man who said that he would allow others to make the laws of a nation if he might be allowed to make the ballads ought to have bargained for the making of the school histories as well.

Mr. Chauncey Depew, who generally knows what he is talking about, predicts that there will some day be a war between the United States and Great Britain, and among the sources of the ill-feeling of Americans towards Great Britain, of which that war is to be the result, he gives a prominent place to the school histories. Mr. Samuel Plimsoll agrees with Mr. Depew in thinking that much ill-feeling towards England has been engendered by these books, and is anxious to counteract their influence. The Governor-General of Canada, in a recent speech, also accused the American school histories of being enemies to international good will. So does the writer of a lively little work on *The Land of the Dollar*. This writer quotes in proof of his assertion a passage from one of the histories which is unquestionably venomous. He, however, picked up the book in a second-hand store; he does not give its date, nor does it appear that he enquired whether it was in actual or extensive circulation. He tells us that he bought an armful of the books, but he quotes from only one.

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My own impression had been that the acrimony of the American school histories in speaking of Great Britain and their unfairness in treating questions between Great Britain and the United States were, as well as the anti-British violence of Fourth-of-July orations, rather things of the past. I, however, requested a leading publisher of New York, an Englishman, and representative of an English firm, to send me the school histories which were most in use. He sent me three, those of Higginson (1875), Anderson (1874), and Quackenbos (1857). These I have examined, and I must confess that I do not find in any one of them aught of which an Englishman could seriously complain. They are patriotic, of course; and in the quarrel between Great Britain and America take the American side; but they certainly are not venomous, nor should I say that they were wilfully or even materially unfair. Here are specimens of their tone in dealing with the American Revolution:

"There were some reasons why it seemed just that the Americans should be taxed. The debt of the British government was very great, and part of this debt had been incurred in defending the American colonies from the French and Indians. So it seemed fair that these colonies should help to pay it; and probably they would not have objected if they had been represented in the British government, so they could at least have had a voice in deciding what their taxes should be. But this was not allowed; and so, when the famous 'Stamp Act' was passed, in 1765, the popular indignation was very great.

"There was nothing very bad about the law called the 'Stamp Act' in itself, and Englishmen would not have complained of it at home. This famous act required only that all deeds and receipts, and other legal documents, should be written or printed on stamped paper, and that this paper should be sold by the tax collectors, the money going to the government. It was such a law as has always existed in England: and, indeed, taxes have since been imposed in a similar way in America. The colonists objected to it only because it involved a principle. No matter how trifling the tax might be they objected to it. They said the British government had no right to put this or any other tax upon them when they were not represented in the government. 'No taxation without representation' was a phrase constantly heard in the colonies in those days; and the excitement about the Stamp Act was the real beginning of the Revolutionary War."—Higginson, pp. 161-2.

About the Tories Higginson's history says:

"Then we must remember that there were other men, and often good men, too, who felt very sad about all this, and who thought it was very wrong to resist King George, and that it would ruin the colonies even to attempt such a thing; and who tried, with tears in their eyes, to persuade the patriots to listen to reason. These were generally the rich and prosperous men, and those who held offices under the British government; in

short, the people who had most to lose by war in any case. These men were called Tories in those days, and grew more and more unpopular." Pp. 176-77.

Anderson in the section on the causes of the Revolutionary War says :

"The expenses which Great Britain had incurred in the French and Indian War greatly increased her national debt. The English ministry, asserting that this had been done in defending their American possessions, proposed to lessen the burden by taxing the colonies. In connection with the proposition thus made it was affirmed that the right to tax the colonies was inherent in Parliament.

"On the other hand, it was maintained that the colonies had been founded at their own expense, and that, while they had already contributed their full proportion in defending themselves, the advantages resulting from their preservation were shared by England in common with themselves. The colonists also maintained that they could be justly taxed only by a legislature in which they were represented. Inasmuch, then, as they were not allowed to send representatives to the British Parliament, that body had no right to tax them.

"Besides, the policy of Great Britain towards her colonies had been for years unjust and illiberal, and calculated to incite a rebellious spirit. The Navigation Act, previously described, and the issuing of 'Writs of Assistance,' in 1761, were measures which were loudly complained of. The 'writs' were general search-warrants empowering custom-house officers to break open ships, stores, and private dwellings, in search of merchandise on which it was suspected no duty had been paid." Pp. 65-66.

Quackenbos is perhaps rather more bitter. He says :

"The people of America were descendants of men who had fled from oppression, and braved the hardships of the wilderness for the blessings of civil and religious liberty. They had endured incredible sufferings, and through their own unaided industry had at last prospered and grown strong. When poor and feeble they had been neglected by the mother country; as soon as they became worth governing Britain sent them governors; and now that they were growing rich, she sought to increase her revenue by taxing them. A pretext was not wanting. Heavy expenses had been incurred by the home government for the protection of the colonies in the French and Indian War; and these, it was claimed, should be reimbursed. The commanders sent over had been generally incompetent, and much of their success was due to the colonial troops and officers who served under them. Yet the Americans would not have objected to contributing their share had they been allowed a voice in laying the tax or recting how it should be appropriated. Having no representatives in Parliament, however, they claimed that Parliament had no right to tax them. The ministers of George II. had not only asserted the right, but exercised it by laying duties on various imported articles. The question was freely discussed throughout America, and everywhere a unanimous voice rose from the people that taxation without representation was unjust and intolerable. The law imposing obnoxious duties was declared unconstitutional and oppressive. In New England it was constantly evaded by secretly conveying the taxable articles ashore and concealing them from the collectors. To

put a stop to this practice, on the accession of George III. In 1760, edicts were issued commanding all sheriffs and constables to aid the collectors when called upon in breaking open and searching cellars, houses, or vessels that were suspected of containing concealed goods." Pp. 188-9.

On reference to a friend thoroughly cognizant of the subject, I was told that Higginson, Anderson, and Quackenbos were favorable specimens, and that there were other school histories in which more of anti-British feeling would be found. My friend has been so good as to send me a series of extracts. Even in these I really find nothing that I should say was intended to stimulate hatred of Great Britain, and I find generally a desire at all events to be fair. Mrs. Lee's history (1895) says of the Boston massacre :

"Boston showed so resolute a spirit to resist the revenue laws that, in 1770, a collision took place between the citizens and British soldiers quartered there to enforce the laws, in which two Bostonians were killed and others mortally wounded. The news of this 'Boston massacre,' as it was called, spread all over the country, and everywhere stirred up strong feelings of resistance to British tyranny. But, in fact, the soldiers only fired into the mob to preserve their own lives, and were not very much to blame." . . .

Russell (1837) discusses the question of resistance to tyranny calmly enough, saying that:

"Before the principle is called into action, it should be determined whether the good which is expected from resistance will counterbalance the evils of insurrection when order is destroyed and liberty degenerates into licentiousness; and it should not be forgotten that the evils of insurrection are certain and imminent while the good which is expected from resistance is probable and remote."

Swinton (1871), explaining the real cause of the Revolution, says :

"The attachment of the American Colonies to the 'mother country' was never stronger than at the close of the French War. The colonists were proud of being descended from British ancestors, and gloried in sharing the rights of subjects of England. The trials and triumphs of the French wars made colonists and Englishmen feel more than ever like brothers. It is true the colonists had some grievances. The English 'navigation laws' and 'trade monopoly' bore heavily on the industry, commerce, and manufactures of the Colonies. These grievances made *some* dissatisfaction, but not a great deal. In all other respects America might well be satisfied to be under the government of England. This being the case, the important question arises: How was it that the Colonies began a revolt which resulted in their *independence*? The usual answer is, that the attempt of England to *impose taxes* upon the American Colonies without their consent was the cause of the Revolutionary War. This is *true* in part only. The imposition of taxes was the *occasion* of the revolt of the

colonies; but its *cause* was that the whole history of the American Colonies *meant* independence. Providence so designed it."

Grimshaw (1822) is hostile, yet he pays an emphatic tribute to the character of Carleton.

One of the most exceptionable is Guernsey's, but it was published in 1849. As a rule, though not invariably, it will be found, so far as the specimens before me are concerned, the acrimony and the space allotted to the incidents of the Revolutionary War diminished with the increase in the distance of the date of publication from that event.*

It could hardly be expected that in giving an account of the quarrel between the British government and the colonies, American writers would be less severe in condemning the acts of the British government or less favorable to their own cause than were Chatham, Fox, Burke and Barré.

A large, and what appears a disproportionate, space is given, perhaps even in the later histories, to the Revolutionary War, and the details of that war, some of which, of course, are exasperating, since the royal armies unquestionably committed excesses, are narrated with disagreeable minuteness. But it is not necessary to ascribe this to deliberate malice. The Revolutionary War does, in fact, fill rather a large space in the comparatively brief annals of the United States. Its chief actors are the national heroes and the national types of patriotic virtue. Its incidents, or those of the war of 1812, are about the only matter by which an ungifted American writer can hope to enliven his work and appeal to the imagination of young readers. It is not in American school histories alone that a disproportionate space is occupied by the annals of war. Thirst of martial glory is nowhere extinct, and nothing is so picturesque as a battle. It is not easy to present in a form interesting to a child a series of political events and characters, the issues between Jefferson and Hamilton, the struggle between Adams and Jackson, or even the political contest with slavery. Nor can an ordinary writer lend picturesqueness to the progress of social improvement, of commerce, or of invention.

*The following table has been furnished me: Grimshaw, 1822, devotes one-third of his space to the Revolution; Russell, 1837, one-third; Goodrich, edition used, published about 1881, one-fifth; Guernsey, 1849, one-third; Lossing, 1860, one-third; Holmes, 1870, one-fifth; Swinton, 1871, one-sixth; Barnes, 1871, 1885, etc., one-seventh; Stephens, 1875, one-seventh; Johnson, 1885, one-ninth; Montgomery, 1890, one-eighth; Shinn, 1895, one-seventh; Lee, 1895, one-seventh; Cooper, Estill, and Lemmon, 1895, one-eighth.

It unluckily happens that Great Britain is the only foreign nation with which the Americans have waged wars whereof they have much reason to be proud, for few would deem victory over such enemies as the Mexicans very glorious, even if that war had not been waged in the special interest of slavery. All the American trophies before 1861 were trophies of success over the British. The North has now another set of trophies. But the enemy in this case was not foreign, at least was not regarded as foreign, though the war was in its real character international. The writers of school histories, if they intend their work for the whole Union, though they may themselves be free from bias, will have now a perplexing task, and it is not surprising to hear that in the South there is a demand for histories written from the Southern point of view. To write from an impartial point of view would be difficult enough even for a foreigner, if he had any strong feeling about slavery, but for a native either of North or South almost impossible. The impossible, however, is sometimes done.

Sensible Englishmen and Americans must now be pretty well agreed about the rights of the quarrel between the British government and the American colonies. The political connection between the mother country and a colony capable of self-government, like the American colonies of Great Britain, was fraught with misunderstanding. The colony had better, like the Hellenic colony, have taken the sacred fire from the altar-hearth of the mother country and made its own way in the world, retaining a sentimental and honorary connection with its parent. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the American colonies needed the protection of the mother country against France, though we can hardly tell what exertions, had they been left to themselves, they might have made for their own defence, or how far reliance on Imperial help interfered with their self-help and masked from them the necessity of union. But as soon as an end was put to the need of protection by the conquest of French Canada, the natural tendency to separation prevailed, with all the more certainty as there were in the colonies political elements, Puritan and Presbyterian, antagonistic to the British institutions of monarchy, aristocracy, and church establishment. Nobody can imagine it possible that the colonies, with all their present millions of people, should forever have remained

dependencies and in allegiance to an old-world government and a parliament on the other side of the Atlantic. Once recognizing as inevitable the dissolution of the bond, we may all treat with historical dispassionateness the particular instrumentalities by which it was brought about, and calmly apportion the due measures of blame or praise to all concerned, considering that they were, as nearly as free agents could be, the ministers of Fate.

There can hardly be a greater literary offence than the infusion, through a school history, of false notions, unworthy prejudices and base passions into the hearts of youth. In the Report of the Commissioners of Education for 1894-95 there is a series of specimens of the methods of teaching American history in British school books. An Englishman reading these extracts is glad to find that they are laudably free from prejudice or passion; that they state the facts fairly; that they do not shrink from laying blame, when it is due, on the British government, or even on the British people; and award just praise to opponents. One of them says:

"The chief causes of this long and disastrous conflict are to be sought in the high notions of prerogative held by George III., his infatuated and stubborn self-will, and in the equally absurd self-conceit of his English subjects."

The same book says:

"The descendants of the old soldiers of the Parliament began to repeat the grand lesson of the long struggle of their English forefathers against the crown, and 'Taxation without representation is tyranny' became the watch-word of the brave patriots who were to fight in America for the self-same rights that the Englishmen of old had wrung from the tyrant John, the haughty Edward, and the reluctant Charles I."

Washington deprecated the indulgence of inveterate antipathies to particular nations or passionate attachments to others, which, as he said, made a nation a slave to its antipathies and attachments. Aristotle two thousand years before had expressed the same sentiment in a general way, saying that it was slavish to be always acting with another person in one's eye. It makes that other person the arbiter of your feelings and actions, whether the case be one of unreasoning devotion or of passionate enmity. Moreover, with irrational and inveterate hatred a mixture of envy may generally be traced.

"I am not wanting in love of the New, but I own that I am wanting in hatred of the Old." So said a citizen of one of the

American colonies of Spain the other day, when he was asked to curse his ancient mother country. Great Britain was a far better mother country than Spain, and every one who has a glimmer of historic sense must know that the Old had to be before the New could come into being.

To say that the school histories ought not to be patriotic would be wrong. But patriotism may be awakened without unduly dilating on the details of the revolutionary war. It may be kept alive by setting forth the magnitude and importance of the victory gained, the new departure of humanity, political and social, the hopes of the New World, and the part in the fulfilment of those hopes which the American child when it comes to manhood will be called upon to play.

On the whole, however, I am confirmed in my belief that the influence of the American books in stimulating international ill-will has been overstated. It is too likely that if Great Britain persists in maintaining herself as a political and military power upon this continent Mr. Chauncey Depew's prediction will be fulfilled. But I cannot think that the catastrophe will be due to so great an extent as he and others suppose to the vicious influence of American school histories.

The special fault which, if I may venture to say it, I should be inclined to find with these books, is want of literary art. The writers may have thought that literary art would be wasted upon histories for children. At all events they have not bestowed it. The language is generally flat, and the story is not well told. It is partly, perhaps, by lack of descriptive power that the writers are driven to give so much space to war. If they were artists they might find a way of lending interest to the events in the achievements of peace. To tell a story well, so that it may impress the imagination and fix itself in the memory of the reader, the writer must have distinctly conceived it as a whole in his own mind. This is what masters of narrative have evidently done. Freshness, simplicity, and vividness of language—without turgidity or grandiloquence—are also indispensable in a narrative intended for the young. If any American would compose a school history combining these literary qualities with truthfulness, impartiality, and freedom from low passions, he might render no small service to the nation.

GOLDWIN SMITH.